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in the nation in the '50's is no longer in existence. The number of school districts in our state has reduced by more than 80% and the number of rural school children by nearly 60%. The teachers shortage has given way to a surplus of qualified teachers and those with college educations and also a degree now is much more accessible than it was in the past. Let me give you some figures on the teachers in the state that can teach with a rural elementary teachers certificate at the present time. There are 1531 who can legally teach in our state with this type of a certificate. Now in Grades K-6 in Class II schools, and for further definition of Class II schools, they are small town schools, there are 124 teachers. Of these 124 teachers, 112 or 90% currently have baccalaureate degrees. In Class I schools, these are schools having seven or more teachers, there are 108 teachers teaching. At the present time, 101 of these or 94% currently have baccalaureate degrees. There are 1299 teachers in schools that employ from one to six teachers and 71% of these teachers or 926 currently hold degrees. In other words, and this is a very important point, almost three-fourths of the teachers in positions that are affected by LB 833 would not be affected since they already hold degrees. The question that was brought up last year that may be brought up again this year is what about the 392 that do not have degrees. I assure you that the aim of LB 833 is not to suggest that those persons be replaced by college graduates. The bill provides that these teachers presently holding rural elementary certificates must progress toward a baccalaureate degree, eight semester hours per...eight semester hours every three years. In other words, these elementary teaching certificates are issued for a three year period. The requirement in 833 would be that they obtain eight years toward their baccalaureate during these three years. In essence, and this is important, the thrust of this bill is really directed toward persons not currently certificated who would enter the teaching profession after the effective date of the bill. Now you will probably ask about emergency situations or situations that might create a hardship for teachers. The rules and regulations governing the issuance of teaching certificates do provide the Department of Education with the authority to issue emergency permits. They have been very willing to do this in the past, and I am sure in those cases that would require it in the future, they will not amend this practice. Now a year ago, when LB 122 went across the Board, it passed on Final Reading 35 to 5. When the Governor vetoed the bill and our attempt at an override failed with the vote being 27 to 20. Once again, I would say that this bill is, I think, the final step in assuring that we have certification for teachers throughout the state and I would move that it be moved from General File to E & R Initial.

SPEAKER BURBACH: The Chair recognizes Senator Cal Carsten.